

Edward Kolb Acceptance Speech, Homer L. Hitt  
Distinguished Alumnus Award  
University of New Orleans, New Orleans, Louisiana  
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As a child growing up in Lakeview, I heard tales of an exotic, mysterious place, referred to as “across the Lake.” Occasionally I would overhear my parents speak in hushed voices about this person, or that person, who moved “across the Lake.” The very vagueness of “across the Lake” terrified me. I imagined that it was a euphemism for a place so horrible that when someone said “across the Lake” it was like saying “the place that must not be named,” sort of the geographical equivalent of Lord Voldemort.

I assumed that people who moved “across the Lake” had committed some vile crime against society and were banished from New Orleans, the only place any sensible person would choose to live. I dreaded that one day I would do something terrible and be exiled “across the Lake.”

Later, when I read Alexander Dumas’s great books *The Count of Monte Cristo* and *The Man in the Iron Mask* as a precocious 6-year old, I couldn’t begin to imagine exactly where Château d’If or the Bastille were located, but I knew they were somewhere “across the Lake.”

On those rare occasions when my parents took my brother and me to the lakefront, I would gaze “across the Lake” and imagine the frozen tundra that began on the North Shore of the Lake. I also imagined those far-away places with exotic sounding names like Paris, Helsinki, Istanbul, and Covington.

I never left Lakeview as a child, and I just assumed that I would live my entire life in the 70124 zip code. Sure I went to high school in the 70119 zip code and I “went away” to college all the way to the 70122 zip code. I certainly never imagined that one day I would live and work “across the Lake.”

Chicago is, of course, “across the Lake.” You just take I-10 to I-55, cross the Lake, and keep going for a while...a long while.

Time is relative. Everyone has seen the cartoon of Einstein in bed, smoking a cigarette, explaining to his obviously displeased wife, “Well ...that might have been fast for you.” Since time is relative, I honestly can’t say where the 30 years went, since I first ventured “across the lake.”

But it is wonderful, if only for a few days, to be back on this side of the Lake. There are many things I miss about New Orleans. Breakfast donuts from McKenzie’s, lunch at the grill of K&B Drugstore, shopping at Schwegman’s, and, of course, dinner at Kolb’s Restaurant.

Some things change. Somehow UNO moved mysteriously out of the 70122 zip code all the way to the 70148 zip code. There are also other changes at UNO. When I started, tuition was \$140 per semester. I know I spent more on beer than tuition.

There is an approach to life here in New Orleans that you don't find many other places. You can experience it here this morning. In many places people aren't serious about breakfast, but a true New Orleanian knows that breakfast is your most important drink of the day.

And of course I do miss the food. People here know how to eat. The hell with diets! I remember once my Father went on a diet. His idea of a strict diet was removing the pimentos from the olives in his martinis.

In the thirty years I have lived across the Lake, I have traveled all over the world, flying more miles than I care to think about. Adrienne and I even lived in France for a year, which is definitely "across the Lake."

But wherever I go, wherever I live, whatever I do, I know that I have been shaped by growing up in Lakeview, going to school at St. Anthony, Jesuit, and the University of New Orleans. And of course, the largest influence was the love and support from my parents and family.

I received a wonderfully broad education here. For a large public university, there was a nurturing environment, in particular, in the Physics Department. Any professional success I, or any graduate, might have, is also a success of and for this University. Thanks Dr. Ioup. Thank you, UNO.

But the most important thing I experienced at UNO was the people. I went to school here with childhood friends like Mike Broussard, and made great friends here like Paul La Rosa and Clancy Dubos. The people made it a great experience, and a wonderful time.

And of course it was at UNO that I met my first wife, my only wife, and started a family that means so much to me. Thank you Adrienne, thanks Karen, Jeffrey, and Christine.

I am greatly honored to be a Homer L. Hitt Distinguished Alumnus.

Thank you. I will always feel close to UNO, whatever I do, wherever I live and travel "across the Lake."